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7-2007

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Originally published in Informed Librarian Online, July 2007, <http://www.informedlibrarian.com/guestForum.cfm?FILE=gf0707.html>

Recommended Citation

Cox, Elizabeth J. "I'm a New Librarian! ... Now What?." (Jul 2007).

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I'm a New Librarian! ... Now What?

by Elizabeth J. Cox

As a new librarian I have found myself over the last two years looking for information to help me adjust to this new life, especially that as a tenure-track librarian with responsibilities for research and publication. In a previous article¹ I discussed topics I had learned in my first year as a librarian. This brief, annotated bibliography contains a number of books and articles that have been useful to me. Many of these also include links or citations to other resources. While some are geared specifically to academic libraries and to specific departments, many will apply to anyone in any library and any department.

General Resources

Langley, Anne, Edward Gray, and K.T.L. Vaughan. *The Role of the Academic Librarian*. Oxford: Chandos Publishing, 2003.

The book covers general topics such as time management and communication, as well as more specific topics like collection development. The bulk of the specific sections focus on public services, but there is plenty of information for all librarians. Each chapter concludes with a list of further readings.

Osterloh, Cassandra E. "Your first year on the job: five tips to help new librarians." *LIScareer.com* (July 2003). http://www.liscareer.com/osterloh_firstyear.htm.

The author includes some excellent recommendations in this article. My favorites are the first two related to your job and the environment. She suggests that you tread cautiously until you learn the lay of the land (i.e. work politics!)

Scott, Penny. "Resource guide." American Library Association New Members Round Table. <http://www.ala.org/ala/nmrt/nmrtannual2004/NMRTAnnualConferenceBibliography.doc>.

This bibliography is based on two presentations given at the ALA Annual conference in 2004. It is geared towards new graduates and those who have not yet found their first MLS job. However, much of the information provided is usable for new librarians as well. The bibliography is split into two sections: Professional Development and Work/Life Balance. The professional development section includes sections such as "networking" and "speaking/presenting." Another resource available on the NMRT website is the Resume Review Service: <http://www.ala.org/ala/nmrt/comm/jobseekers.htm>.

Shontz, Priscilla K. *Jump Start Your Career in Library and Information Science*. With the assistance of Steven J. Oberg. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2002.

"This book is designed to help new librarians begin to manage a successful and satisfying career" as a librarian. A portion of this book is geared towards job-seekers, but it also includes chapters on interpersonal skills, leadership, and publishing. Each chapter includes a list of

related readings. The website LIScareer.com was created as a companion to this book. I have found many interesting and useful articles on this website, some of which are included here.

Shontz, Priscilla K., ed. *The Librarian's Career Guidebook*. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2004.

This collection of essays includes an entire section on "Experience as an Entry-Level Librarian." Topics in this section include acclimating to a new work place and being tenure-track. The first third of the book is devoted to essays for those interested in librarianship and job-seekers. Additional sections include essays on various skills such as organization and professional development. Most chapters include a list of related readings.

Tucker, Cory, and Reeta Sinha, eds. *New Librarian, New Job: Practical Advice for Managing the Transition*. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2006.

The first chapter in this series of essays is indicative of the entire book, "From Graduate School to the Profession." The book moves on from this and other general topics to more specifics, such as chapters on individual departments and survival skills. A list of references is included at the end of each chapter.

Professional Development

Block, Karla J., and Julia A. Kelly. "Integrating informal professional development into the work of reference." *The Reference Librarian*, no. 72 (2001): 207-217.

The authors describe their experience of improving professional development for reference librarians at a university medical library. However the unique tools that they present can be used by any library's reference staff.

Landry, Abbie. "Ten must reads for new academic librarians." *Reference Services Review* 33, no. 2 (2005): 228-234.

This article covers a wide range of topics, from local (read the Faculty and/or University handbook) to national (read ALA's documents, such as the Code of Ethics).

Documentation/Manuals

Plummer, Karen A., and Christine Rigda. "Creating an online cataloging manual: a case study." *Technical Services Quarterly* 22, no. 2 (2004): 25-36.

In this article, the authors give examples of why manuals are useful and needed, both in general and online. They discuss the process of creating the manual, from creating the content to designing the web site. There are general issues that can be useful for staff in areas outside of cataloging, such as to define local policies and procedures.

Resumé/Curriculum Vitae

Once you have found your job, it is still important to keep up your c.v. Some librarians need to have one for annual reviews. In addition to these resources, check to see if your organization has a template that you need to or should use.

Newlen, Robert R. *Resume Writing and Interviewing Techniques That Work: a How-To-Do-It Manual for Librarians*. New York: Neal-Schuman, 2006.

I was thrilled to discover that a new edition of this excellent resource had been published. This is a hands-on book that includes exercises and worksheets. The author treats it like a manual, with step-by-step instructions. He includes plenty of examples, both good and not-so-good. The book also includes a section on interviewing techniques.

“Resumes of Librarians and Information Professionals.” LISjobs.com.
<http://www.lisjobs.com/onlineresumes.htm>.

The owner of this website will post a resumé for a nominal fee. While there is no review system, this does give you an idea of what other folks are doing with their resumé.

Research

Crawford, Walt. *First Have Something to Say*. Chicago: American Library Association, 2003.

This book covers all the basics, from why write to what’s next and everything in between. The author discusses in plain, conversational language both traditional and non-traditional writing outlets. He also covers presentations and public speaking. I recommend this book to everyone I know!

Labaree, Robert V. “Tips for getting published in scholarly journals: strategies for academic librarians.” *College and Research Libraries News* 65, no. 3 (March 2004): 137-139.

In this article the author discusses “the processes, procedures, and the pitfalls of becoming an author.” The article is a good place to start -- simple and basic. One recommendation that I found particularly useful was to take advantage of meetings and workshops by using them to help develop research ideas. For example, at a conference last year, I heard a number of people discussing their concerns about a current issue, which I have turned into a research article.

Mann, Merlin. “Hack your way out of writer’s block.” *43 Folders*.
<http://www.43folders.com/2004/11/18/hack-your-way-out-of-writers-block/>

This blog posting includes great, simple, and occasionally funny suggestions for dealing with writer’s block. Some include doing something physical, like take a walk or refocus such as work on the title. Be sure to read the comments because there are good hints there as well. (Note: contains some profanity.)

Leadership

Giesecke, Joan, and Beth McNeil. *Fundamentals of Library Supervision*. Chicago: American Library Association, 2005.

This book provides an “overview and foundation for the tasks and challenges of being a manager.” It covers the basics such as hiring and interviewing as well as a variety of topics including teamwork, motivation, meetings, and rewards.

Pugh, Lyndon. *Leadership and Learning: Helping Libraries and Librarians Reach Their Potential*. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2001.

If you are at all interested in becoming a leader in libraries, this is a very useful book. Included are chapters on topics such as “How Librarians Learn,” self development, as well as team-work and motivation.

Pymm, Bob, and Damon D. Hickey. *Learn Library Management*. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2003.

This book is geared towards first-time managers or supervisors. The authors follow a “hands-on, practical approach.” They include exercises for most topics, as well as lists of associated readings.

I hope these resources will be as helpful for you as they have been for me.

Elizabeth Cox is the Special Formats Cataloger at Southern Illinois University Carbondale, where she is responsible for cataloging cartographic materials, serials, and music materials. She also serves as the co-liaison to the Music Department. In her spare time she likes to read mysteries, go to movies with her husband, and has just recently discovered the joys of gardening. She also enjoys spending time with (and spoiling) her five nieces and nephews.

¹ Cox, Elizabeth J. “[On being a new librarian](#).” *College and Research Libraries News* 68, no. 4 (April 2007).